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SOME OPPORTUNITIES IN AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY WORK

By MRS. IDA A. KIDDER, *Librarian, Oregon Agricultural College*

The longer we live the more practical and the more idealistic most of us grow, paradoxical as that may seem; by practical we mean, if a deed must be done, hunt the shortest, most effective way of doing it. Some one has said the world asks just three questions of every man, What can you do? How well can you do it? How quickly can you do it? But we cannot answer even these questions satisfactorily without ideals. By being idealistic we mean, appreciating more deeply that only as we are actuated by high and strong ideals shall we accomplish anything worth while; ideals are the impulsive force which pulls us up and out to accomplishment.

So when the writer was asked to prepare a paper for the Agricultural Libraries Section on "Some opportunities in agricultural library work," she felt that she had no right to confine herself to the few methods of her own library and her own few ideas and ideals. The agricultural librarians were therefore called upon to tell what they were doing outside the regular routine library work and what they thought might further be possible. This paper is, therefore, a compilation of what is being done in our various libraries and of what under sufficiently favorable circumstances our librarians believe may be done. From these suggestions each of us can see the opportunities presented by our own library.

From some of the replies to the questionnaire sent out, it would seem that some received the idea that something original or spectacular was desired; far from it, our work is too great, too vital to be weakened by spectacular attempts at originality. Also such an attempt would be futile; there is very little originality to be found. There may be such an unusual adaptation of methods employed in other lines of business that it looks like originality, and we can scarcely have too much careful scrutiny of the methods of other successful busi-

ness enterprises, or too much weighing of the principles which underlie these methods. It sometimes seems as if librarians were rather too prone to feel that their work is set off in a sacred niche, and like most things set apart in sacred niches, it doesn't get taken out and scrutinized and criticised often enough.

Now we are going to observe the methods in operation in many libraries and see what suggestions we may get for improvement in our own work.

Analyzing the replies to the questionnaire sent out, there stand out clearly certain divisions of our work: methods of administration, work for students, work for the faculty, and that new and wonderful work for those outside the college campus, especially those in rural communities.

In the work for students, the opportunity most remarked was instructing students in the use of the library. In many schools the librarian is giving instruction in the use of the library, usually to freshmen, ranging in extent from a regular two credit course, to three or four lectures a semester.

One library reports that in addition to work for freshmen a course of six lectures is given to students taking secretarial work; the lectures cover classification, cataloging, indexing, subject headings and government documents.

Special bibliographies are made out for the use of students in certain courses.

Some libraries keep a vertical file of material which might, otherwise, be easily lost, and also material of an ephemeral nature.

Lectures are being given by the librarian to seniors in domestic science and art on reading in the home.

Several libraries are making a strong effort to get complete files of duplicate bulletins and reports so filed as to be easy of access for reference work.

Many libraries are extending the inter-

est of students in cultural literature by use of the library bulletin board and the college paper, calling attention frequently to a new and interesting book or magazine article. New books are displayed on special tables or shelves in the reading room, and partial lists of them published in the college paper. One excellent bit of work is reported by a live library—traveling libraries, or small collections of books, are sent to the women's dormitories, and it is suggested that collections of cultural books might be sent to the different club and fraternity houses. In the reading room of several libraries there are special collections of books for general culture on shelves close at hand. One library has on these shelves the Harvard Classics in the edition bound with facsimiles of the celebrated historical bindings. From this attractively bound group of books there are always in circulation from four to ten volumes; this same library has frequently on exhibit at a table conveniently near the entrance attractive groups of books on special subjects. One library makes the effort to interest its students in broader culture, by placing in attractive covers among the most popular magazines, an illustrated periodical published in each of the languages taught in the school.

Another wide-awake library has instituted a very prosperous and growing Book-a-month club, the membership of which is entirely voluntary. The purpose of this club is stimulation to the reading of general cultural literature; the faculty has been interested in this movement by being asked to select a certain number of books and to give a talk on the books selected. This is one of the most original and progressive movements for general culture reported.

In the same line of endeavor one librarian reports a dream which she has not yet realized. She thinks that for our technical schools nothing would so broaden and deepen interest in the great books of the world as to require that in sections of moderate size every student should attend a session once a week in which throughout

his entire four years' course a selection from some great book was read aloud by an excellent reader of broad culture, who should give just enough explanation to arouse interest and make the historical setting clear. A number of duplicates of the books read from should be in the library for circulation to those interested enough to pursue the subject. Her argument that this course should be required rather than elective is, that the students whose interest in good literature is already aroused and who would elect such a course do not so greatly need it as the students whose interest is not yet awakened. There should be nothing compulsory about the course except attendance at the readings. This librarian thinks constant association with good literature may be trusted to awaken and cultivate a taste for it. We should like to see this beautiful dream realized in some school with courage enough to step outside the beaten path.

From all the reports received, it would seem that nearly every librarian has the general culture of the students greatly at heart and is endeavoring in season and out of season to promote it, and though many of us have little time to go outside our routine work to help in this really vital matter, there is always in our hands what is perhaps, after all, the most powerful and effective instrument—personal help. If we have the spirit for it the students will come to us and force us to give them of our little time the help they need. In our every day service at the desk what opportunities we have! One of the sweetest memories of my life is awakening in a big sturdy boy the love of poetry. He had come to the library to get for a friend a copy of Gray's "Elegy in a country churchyard." I took him to the shelves with me (taking a student with you to get a cultural book is always an excellent thing), then I read a little of the poem to him. He exclaimed, "Why! that's great." I asked if he cared for poetry; he replied no, but if it was like that he was going to read some and asked me to recommend some poems. This I did, also recommending him to read them

aloud at first, and so this young fellow, just at the time of his life when he needed the idealism and music of poetry, came into his rightful heritage. I recall another lad, the captain of our football team, who accidentally overheard me reading Kipling's "McAndrews' hymn." He begged the book and became a devoted admirer of Kipling's poems, and several years afterward I found he had become a lover of good poetry. Let us then take heart of grace; our simple, nearby opportunities for this service are perhaps our greatest.

A considerable amount of work is reported as being done for the students who come from the farms for various short courses: lectures by the librarian on books and reading for the farm home and how to procure material from the State library commission and from the United States Department of Agriculture; lectures on children's reading, with an exhibit of children's books for the mothers; exhibits of books from the college library on subjects of special interest to different groups of short course students, and a specimen traveling library from the State library commission.

One library has a collection of books permanently in the reading room that are strictly scientific in basis, but popularly written. This collection was purchased from a fund left for that purpose by various short course classes. The origin of this little library, as related, is very interesting. A young lawyer, a graduate of Yale, who had come "back to the land" and was attending the farmers' short course, was much struck by the smallness of the library, and collected a fund from his class for the purchase of books; the librarian conceived the idea of a little farmers' library of scientific books popularly written. This library has grown by successive gifts from short course classes and is much enjoyed by the farmers and their wives. The announcement of the short courses always contains an invitation and welcome to the library, mentioning the Short Course classes' own collection of books.

One school invites the state librarian to

address the short course students, making them acquainted with the resources of the state library and its very generous lending policy and methods.

It would seem that the opportunity afforded by the presence of so many farmers and their wives at the short courses was one of the greatest presented to our librarians. We have thus a chance to send to the farm an effective message calling to a higher intellectual life. There is no reason why our farm homes and the grounds about them should not be just as beautiful, just as artistic as those of the city, and nobody has a better opportunity to foster this artistic expression than the librarian if she has it on her heart and her mind. Why may not the librarian coöperate with the landscape gardener, the lecturer on architecture, the teacher of domestic art, and have in her library collections of books on exhibition which these lecturers recommend? Why may not the librarian in her lectures on books for the farm emphasize the aesthetic side, which usually gets all too little attention from the lecturers absorbed in their technical subjects? Why may she not in sending out to the farmer some technical book requested, inclose a beautifully illustrated book on landscape gardening, or house decoration, or a book of poems or essays appreciative of the common beauties of nature? Why, in fact, should not the agricultural librarian as a public servant in one of the broadest fields of service, feel it her duty to be alert to every possible opportunity to foster the love of beauty in the country home as the city librarian does in the town? Who that cares for these things that elevate and make for the sweetness and light of home has so good an opportunity as we to embody our ideals in action for the country dweller, and what home presents so favorable a field for coöperation with nature to produce beauty, as the farm home in the midst of the open country? It is encouraging to note the coöperation of the farm dwellers for their own advance in intellectual and social life as well as in busi-

ness, and it will be our loss if agricultural libraries have no part in this expansion.

There was rather a meager report from libraries as to special work done for the assistance of the faculty. Several libraries reported that lists of new books added to the library were sent to the members of the faculty. This certainly is an excellent work as it noticeably increases the reading of the faculty outside their own technical subjects.

One library reports a library reception held for the faculty, at which there were on display interesting collections of books; during the evening the librarian gave a brief talk, calling attention to the collection of trade bibliographies and the "Book review digest" briefly explaining the use of each in the purchase of books; she also called attention to the vertical file recently begun; she impressed upon the faculty the privilege of inter-library loans, especially those of the United States Department of Agriculture Library; she called attention to the duplicate collection of bulletins and reports which was being constantly increased and made more usable, she bespoke their help in sending to the library such bulletins as they received, but did not care to retain for their own collections. These receptions were well attended and the faculty seemed to find them enjoyable, and expressed themselves as benefited by the information given.

Another library reports making up special bibliographies for her faculty. Another librarian, in charge of continuations, has succeeded in arousing a great deal of interest in her department, having, by her enthusiasm and personal work, aroused the faculty to assist her in building up her collections.

One librarian who has the interest of her faculty warmly at heart, reports that in a time of financial stress she set about procuring that splendid collection, the publications of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. The officers of the Institution responded promptly to her plea, and before the depressing year was ended, the faculty were cheered by the gift of this collection,

so wonderfully inspiring to men in the research field.

There is little doubt that our greatest service to our faculties must be direct and personal. The faculty in few of our agricultural colleges is so large that we may not know the members well. We may know the bright young man who is becoming too absorbed in his specialty, who is narrowing his reading to the degree that his perspective is becoming limited, so that, presently, in his own chosen field he will not be able to estimate values correctly. It is for his librarian to lure him into the safer, broader path by a delightful book or article so interesting that he *must* read it. It is the librarian who sees that the head of some department is too utilitarian in his selection of periodicals, it is she who can call his attention to those of broader, more inspiring scope, and if she has the genuine sympathy with him and his work which she ought to have, he will listen to her suggestion. It should always be suggestion, not advice.

There is, perhaps, no opportunity with our faculty which we should be more careful to cultivate than that of inspiring them on all occasions with confidence in our disinterestedness and desire to be perfectly just. Disinterestedness is the source of great power with a college librarian. We never can afford to allow personal feeling to creep into our relation with our faculty. We must regard each man's work as of value, we must try to see of what extreme value it appears to him; that will explain why he sometimes appears jealous and selfish, and why he may be impatient with the imperfections of our service; his fault grows out of his virtue usually, and we ought to be big enough and disinterested enough to sympathize with his ultimate desire and ignore the unpleasantness of his method. When we get to this state of mind our own irritation vanishes and his greatly diminishes, for it is remarkable how much more quickly we hear what a man thinks, than what he says.

The opportunity which seems to be impressing itself most deeply upon agricul-

tural librarians just at present is that of reaching the farm home with helpful literature. This, no doubt, has been brought to us more forcibly through the activities of our colleges under the Smith-Lever act. It is gratifying to note that though there seems comparatively little financial provision made, the librarians are bestirring themselves that they may have a part in this interesting, broadening work.

The writer was greatly pleased to note by the replies to her questionnaire, that the majority of agricultural librarians are working in harmony with their state library or state library commission in furnishing literature to the farmer and his home. It seems the ideal way that the state library or commission should furnish the more popular, frequently called for material and the college the more technical. In our own state this method works very well. The college library turns over to the state library all requests which it is thought that library can grant, and the state library turns over to the college all requests for material of such a technical nature that the state library cannot afford to carry it. The state and college librarians whenever they speak before farmers and their wives acquaint them with this arrangement. This coöperation permits much more effective and economical service than if each operated independently of the other. As limited as are the funds in every state for this kind of work, we cannot afford expensive duplication; we are also interesting each farmer served in two valuable state institutions instead of one. It speaks well for the broad-minded outlook of the librarians that there appears no jealousy concerning the work of the state libraries and commissions in this field, this, certainly, is as it should be.

Some librarians are going out occasionally under the auspices of the extension division of the college to speak before granges and in the movable schools of agriculture.

Several libraries are making out lists of desirable books for the farmer and his home. One reports lists of books for high

school agricultural libraries, published in the state educational journals, and lists of books and periodicals for the farm home in the farm and county papers. Another library coöperates with the Library commission in making out lists of short stories for reading aloud at the gatherings of country girls. This librarian suggests collecting for country girls, old magazines containing especially good stories for reading aloud.

Several college libraries that either do not have effective commissions or do not coöperate with such as they have, are sending out package libraries consisting of books, bulletins and clippings; these are sent either direct to the farmer or through the county farm adviser.

Some libraries have a special assistant detailed to assist the extension division in its correspondence courses.

The extension work of our colleges is just in its dawn, and it behooves the live librarian to be alert to render every possible service. It is true that most of us are already taxed severely to meet our immediate duties with the resources at command, but we must not allow the difficulties in the way to limit our vision, or dampen our enthusiasm; the way usually opens to the wisely adventurous; and certainly we who have gone into the country and have seen the many homes bare of the beauty which might have blossomed there, and lacking the stimulating books and periodicals which should be theirs, must realize that here is a field for enriching life, our very own, a field which no one has so great an opportunity to cultivate as we, and we must be strong enough and wise enough to go up and possess the land.

Several successful librarians have spoken of the need of a better organization of our library staff and resources, and of better business methods among us. There is, no doubt, a goodly opportunity for improvement here. In our smaller libraries especially, it would no doubt be well for us to consider carefully whether we have our staff, however small, as effectively organized as possible. Are we all doing a little

of everything, or have we organized our force, making certain assistants responsible for certain departments of the work, and impressing upon them the fact that they are not only to care for this department, but are to see that it grows in effectiveness, that they are to be alert for every new method of improving their department, that it is a part of their happy duty to make faculty and students feel the value of the service of that particular department, and above all that they are to realize that the *spirit* in which their department serves is, perhaps, the most important factor in the whole library? Are we pressing home upon our assistants this feeling of responsibility for certain definite work? Nothing so dignifies our work to us, nothing calls out our best service like feeling that this piece of work is our very own; we alone are responsible for its success or failure.

Are we arranging our work so that as many as possible of our assistants have certain hours in which they are in direct contact with the public they serve? Nothing so refreshes and inspires interest as direct contact with students and faculty. This can easily be arranged in libraries where the staff is not too large, and makes not only for refreshment of spirit, but for efficiency of work; for instance, your cataloger is not going to run off into technical ruts if she has a couple of hours a week at the loan desk during the busy time of day and sees whether she is choosing too technical or too popular subjects for her public; also in giving to those assistants doing strictly technical work, a certain period of direct service with students and faculty, there may by careful arrangement, be secured relief from the fatigue of too long periods of one kind of work, thus conserving the efficiency and energy of the staff. This side of our administration merits consideration.

Are we careful in dealing with our assistants to direct and to criticize from the point of view of principles rather than methods? We can much more easily bear a criticism of our method, if we see the

large aim of that method, and are made to feel that it is not because we are negligent or inefficient that we are criticised, but because some great work suffers. The more we lift our criticisms out of personality and up to the plane of large and high service, the more truly and lastingly effective they become. Do those of us who serve as librarians always remember that our assistants have just as high ideals as we, that they make mistakes just as we do, from lack of experience and natural limitations? And do we who are assistants bear patiently the criticisms of our librarians, crediting against their impatience with our mistakes their high ideals of service?

Do we sit down to our problem of library administration like a good business man, marshalling before us the end we desire to accomplish and the forces at our command? Do we plan carefully and deliberately to accomplish with these forces the desired end in the most economical and effective manner? Do we compare our administration and business methods with those of other successful business enterprises, trying to discover the principles which have led to success?

Are we keeping always in view that we are not a department of the college, rivaling in funds or fame other departments, but rather that we are a vital part of every department, that our every failure in service or spirit weakens every department of the college, our every improvement in method, in resources, in spirit lifts the work of every department a little higher? It is only as we take this larger, comprehensive view of our place in the scheme of college work that we can hope to do our legitimate part toward building up a great educational institution.

Are we not only cherishing big, high ideals, but are we putting our brains to the practical realization of our ideals? Our work is so big, so fine, so useful that it is worthy of all our powers.

In looking over all the letters received from the agricultural college librarians, there is one opportunity which stands out above any other, calling most imperatively

that we embrace it. It is plain that our greatest lack is not in enthusiasm, ability, or even practical methods, but in the financial means absolutely necessary to the proper development of our libraries. Unquestionably our small and moderate sized libraries are not taking their legitimate place in the development of the college. The opportunity toward which we must put every particle of our brains and our enthusiasm is, inducing our boards of regents and administrative heads to realize the importance of the library. There are just three factors absolutely indispensable to the normal growth of a college, first rate teachers, first rate research men, a first rate library; and perhaps the most important of these is the library, since the first two cannot be kept in the first class without a constantly renewed, up-to-date library. We must impress these facts upon our president and board of trustees.

We must bring every legitimate pressure to bear to this end. We must arouse our faculty to their duty in making a plea for adequate library equipment. We must be alert on every occasion to press home upon our administrative college authorities the importance and the needs of the library, for it is appallingly plain that without greater resources than are at present provided, few of us can hope to enter into that splendid field of service which waits, an alluring heritage, for our future.

In presenting the subject of our opportunities, the writer feels that they have been very inadequately expressed and are but partially realized, but it is plain that our vision is rising and broadening, and we have only to give ourselves with practical devotion to the opportunities that are opening before us to become true builders, working upon the foundation of the temple of education.

PROBLEMS DISCOVERED IN CATALOGING THE LIBRARY OF THE MISSOURI SCHOOL OF MINES AT ROLLA

BY JESSE CUNNINGHAM, *Librarian, St. Joseph Public Library*
(Formerly Librarian, Missouri School of Mines)

The Missouri School of Mines is a department of the State University of Missouri and is located at Rolla. The University proper is located at Columbia. The Mines school was created in 1870 by an act of the General Assembly and was formally opened in 1871. The statutes fix the status of the school as one of the colleges of the State University. The school is within easy reach of the important mining districts of the state and offers facilities for the study of the theory and practice of mining geology, mining methods, ore dressing and mining machinery. The allied subjects of civil engineering, chemistry, electrical engineering and mechanical engineering are a part of the curriculum of the mining and metallurgical courses.

The library contains about 20,000 vol-

umes exclusive of pamphlets, bulletins and reports of mining companies. The bulk of the collection consists of works in the sciences, chiefly geology, physics and chemistry, and the useful arts, the main part of this division being engineering and mining treatises. In literature the standard American and English authors are represented; there is some fiction; a good section of biography and an extensive collection of description and travel.

The student body of the institution numbers ordinarily about 300 earnest, virile young men ranging in age from 18 to 30 years. There are 30 members of the faculty. These students, the faculty and other officers, the janitors, engineers and gardeners, with pupils from the grade schools, students of the high